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THE CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE.

ALTHOUGH it is now more than seventy years since Sir Robert Peel's ministry introduced into London that force of *gens d'armes* whose organization has since been copied by every other municipality of the civilized world, it is astonishing how few rural districts, especially in the United States, have adopted this effective method of protecting life and property. In the South particularly, where local conditions would dispose one to expect to find an extra number of safeguards thrown around the helpless and defenseless residing in sparsely settled regions of the country, there is rarely any sort of protection whatever. As a consequence, an increase of crime is perceptible in some parts of this section, particularly crimes of that violent type which so frequently drives a community to madness. That the spread of lynch law may therefore be traced in large measure to the lack of adequate protection in rural communities seems unquestionable; for the brutal acts that so often give rise to mob violence occur, in the vast majority of cases, in the country districts. That this state of things is deplored by all good citizens, and that there is a general awakening of the public conscience on the subject, are facts too well known for extended comment. The conviction is gaining ground, moreover, that the most effective means of repressing mob violence is to put an end to those assaults upon the person that originally gave rise to lynchings. Of course the question is no less a moral than an administrative one; and hence it seems to be pretty generally recognized that our system of public instruction must be so amended as to impart to the youth of both races that kind of education which will best train them to become good citizens in the widest sense of that expression. Many are also beginning to discern that *preventive* measures are far superior to *repressive* ones. Social sanitation is just as necessary as those measures which are taken to ward off disease. Accordingly, there is every reason for believing that lynch law

could be very quickly extirpated by the adoption of a system of mounted police for the country districts, whereby many of those shocking deeds which so often call mobs into existence could be prevented, and a general sense of security cultivated everywhere. At the same time, laws against tramps and vagrants might, with the aid of such a force, be better administered and crime more speedily punished by country police courts, to say nothing of the countless other advantages to be gained from the creation of a system of mounted police.

Of the various systems of rural constabulary one of the best is the mounted police force the Canadian government maintains in the Northwest territory. Many of its features are so admirably suited to the needs of the South in the present day that they are herein set forth, with the earnest hope that it may not be very long before a similar organization will be established wherever needed. For many years life and property in British Columbia were insecure, and settlers naturally shrank from taking up the rich lands of the country. Various temporary expedients were tried, until finally the Canadian Parliament passed "The Mounted Police Act of 1894."¹ This celebrated statute consolidated all prior legislation on the subject, and authorized the Governor General to appoint an officer to be called the Comptroller of the Mounted Police Force, whose office is at Ottawa. The comptroller is intrusted with the supervision and management of the entire system. In this work he is assisted by a staff of officers, including a commissioner, a deputy commissioner, a number of superintendents (who have charge of the several police districts into which the territory is divided), and a corps of inspectors, surgeons, and veterinary surgeons.

The commissioner of police is authorized to appoint as many constables as he may deem necessary (not exceeding in all one thousand men), and to appoint from among them noncommissioned officers of different grades. He may also

¹ 57-58 Victoria, c. 27.

appoint extra constables, scouts, and buglers. Naturally enough, the commissioner does not choose his force at random, but requires every applicant to produce a certificate of good character, and at the same time to prove that he is between eighteen and forty years of age, of sound constitution, and able to read and write either the English or the French language.

A member, on joining the force, is required to take the oath of allegiance, as well as an oath of office, whose nature may be gathered from its form, which is as follows:

I, A. B., solemnly swear that I will faithfully, diligently, and impartially execute and perform the duties required of me as a member of the Northwest Mounted Police Force, and will well and truly obey and perform all lawful orders and instructions which I shall receive as, such, without fear, favor, or affection of or toward any person. So help me, God.

Every constable, upon his appointment to the force, signs articles of engagement for a term of service not exceeding five years; but he may be discharged at any time by the commissioner for cause.

The duties of the police force include:

- (a) The preservation of the peace and the prevention of crime.
- (b) The arrest of criminals and others who may be lawfully taken into custody.
- (c) Attendance on magistrates and execution of process.
- (d) The escort and conveyance of prisoners to and from courts and prisons.
- (e) To search for, seize, and destroy intoxicating liquors where their sale is prohibited.

The force is, however, never charged with any duties under municipal by-laws. It is strictly a rural constabulary, and as such it may arrest tramps, vagrants, and other suspicious characters encountered on the highway, and bring them before the police authorities for trial and punishment. The constables are well mounted, and are armed with carbines and revolvers. They are sent out from their barracks in various detachments to inspect and patrol the surrounding country, and on their return report to their superiors all the facts they may have gathered. They also carry mail whenever requested to do so, and cultivate friendly relations with the settlers.

For purposes of administration the territory is divided into several police districts, over each of which there is a superintendent, who corresponds to the captain of a city force. Like the rest of the force, this officer resides at the barracks, where are kept the horses, stock, provisions, artillery, and other property of the police. Very often there are telephone and telegraph wires connecting the barracks with the neighboring communities, and the superintendent holds his men in readiness for any services. Nor is the work of the force, as already intimated, confined to the task of repressing crime. The men devote special attention, for example, to the law against the spread of contagious diseases among cattle, make reports concerning the roads and bridges of the country, examine the condition of crops, distribute seeds to the farmers, and help to check the progress of fires. The barracks are regularly inspected by the health officers, and the horses looked after by the veterinary surgeons. Naturally enough, the more active work is in summer, when members of the force travel thousands of miles. In winter the men usually keep more closely to the barracks, where there are various diversions, including games, lectures, and other forms of recreation. At many quarters there are reading rooms containing magazines and newspapers, and here and there a library. The members of the force are under strictly military discipline, and violations of the police regulations are promptly dealt with. A canteen is usually attached to the barracks, and prizes given for rifle-shooting, cricket matches, billiard tournaments, and the like. The clothing and food are of good quality. The men are regularly drilled, and there is a weekly parade.

The guardroom of the barracks is the common jail of the district. It is in charge of a sergeant, and houses not only prisoners awaiting trial but also those sentenced by the police magistrates. Members of the police force who have violated the regulations of the service are in like manner confined in the guardroom. In some instances civilians appointed to act as justices of the peace are disposed to turn over all cases to the police officers, on the ground that "the

lawyers take exception to every little technicality, and are supported by the 'court.'” Hence there is a tendency in some of the rural districts for the police authorities to assume all magisterial functions, and their promptness in dealing with offenders has won for them general confidence.

Having described the general duties of the force, we may now say a few words in regard to its discipline. Members other than commissioned officers, who are accused of any of the following offenses, lay themselves liable to arrest and trial:

- (a) Disobeying or refusing to obey the lawful command of or striking his superior.
- (b) Oppressive or tyrannical conduct toward his inferior.
- (c) Intoxication, however slight.
- (d) Having intoxicating liquor illegally in his possession, or concealed.
- (e) Directly or indirectly receiving any gratuity, without the commissioner's sanction, or any bribe.
- (f) Wearing any party emblem.
- (g) Otherwise manifesting political partisanship.
- (h) Overholding any complaint.
- (i) Mutinous or insubordinate conduct.
- (j) Unduly overholding any allowances or any other public money intrusted to him.
- (k) Misapplying or improperly withholding any money or goods levied under any warrant or taken from any prisoner.
- (l) Divulging any matter or thing which it is his duty to keep secret.
- (m) Making any anonymous complaint to the government or the commissioner.
- (n) Communicating, without the commissioner's authority, either directly or indirectly, to the public press, any matter or thing touching the force.
- (o) Willfully, or through negligence or connivance, allowing any prisoner to escape.
- (p) Using any cruel, harsh, or unnecessary violence toward any prisoner or other person.
- (q) Leaving any post on which he has been placed as sentry or on other duty.
- (r) Deserting or absenting himself from his duties or quarters without leave.
- (s) Scandalous or infamous behavior.
- (t) Disgraceful, profane, or grossly immoral conduct.
- (u) Violating any standing order, rule, or regulation, or any order, rule, or regulation hereafter made.
- (v) Any disorder or neglect to the prejudice of morality or discipline, although not specified in this act or in any rule or regulation.

All pecuniary penalties form a fund which is applied to

the payment of rewards for good conduct or meritorious services, to the establishment of libraries and recreation rooms, and to such other objects for the benefit of the force as may be approved of. Offenses by the commissioned officers are tried by the commissioner in a summary way, and he is authorized to compel the attendance of witnesses.

Members of the force who are dismissed or discharged from the service are required to surrender all clothing, arms, accouterments, horses, and other things used by the police; while desertion, absence without leave, refusal to do duty, and fraudulently obtaining admission to the force are punishable offenses. The Governor in council is further authorized to enter into arrangements with the authorities of any province of Canada for the use or employment of the force, and may agree upon the amount of money to be paid for such services. He also establishes the precedence and rank in the force of the several commissioned officers; regulates and prescribes the clothing, arms, training, and discipline of the men, and selects the places at or near which members of the force are to be stationed.

Following is the compensation received by the police:

Commissioner, per annum.....	\$2,600 00
Assistant commissioner, per annum.....	1,600 00
Each superintendent, per annum.....	1,400 00
Each inspector, per annum.....	1,000 00
Each surgeon, per annum.....	1,400 00
Each staff sergeant, per diem.....	2 00
Each constable, per diem.....	75
Each bugler.....	40

Frequent patrols are kept moving all over the country, and at least one commissioner reports that "the solution of the Indian problem, in my opinion, is to find them work at fair wages, with prompt pay."¹ The growing inclination on the part of this race to make money seems to have the effect of rendering them more law-abiding, and in many districts the able-bodied men are hard at work. The Indians are also

¹ Report of the Commissioner, 1896, page 2.

buying wagons and machinery, while the industrial schools are having a civilizing influence.¹

It will thus be seen that the duties of the mounted police are varied, and naturally responsibilities are often thrust upon them in unorganized districts, which in the normal course of events they would not think of assuming. Nevertheless their influence is usually good; and whether acting as sanitary inspectors where persons are ignorant of the laws of health, or settling small disputes between employer and employed, or listening to complaints regarding food, or extending medical aid to those who need it, or writing and reading letters for the ignorant, or securing employment for those anxious to work, or performing any other social service—they are looked up to and trusted. And however widely they may sometimes depart from their ordinary duties, they always have in mind their primary object, which is to maintain the peace.

Throughout the various police districts there are a number of outposts where members of the force are stationed, and it is astonishing what a wholesome influence is exerted on the rougher elements of a district by the presence of even a single constable. In him they see the majesty of the law, whilst peaceable citizens breathe easier by reason of his proximity.

Finally, not the least of the many advantages of the mounted police is the magisterial jurisdiction conferred on superintendents and inspectors. Their prompt execution of the law has been mentioned already, but it is difficult to convey any adequate idea of the good results flowing from the swift administration of the law, especially in the country districts. And perhaps an even greater element of strength on the part of the members of the mounted police force is the fact that they are unbiased by party, social, or religious considerations, and are therefore entirely impersonal.

B. J. RAMAGE.

¹Report of the Commissioner, 1898, pp. 3, 4.